(b) if so, the protest made for infringement of the right to information; and

(c) the Pakistan Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) On 23rd September 2001, reportedly under direction from the military regime in Pakistan, the Karachi-based Cable Operators Association announced that they would block distribution of Indian TV news channels. Pakistan authorities, however, denied that they had issued any such instructions. Following the announcement by the Karachi association, Cable Operator Associations in Lahore and Islamabad also cut off distribution of Indian TV news channels. As a result of these steps, officials in the Indian High Commission, Islamabad, were unable to view certain Indian news channels for some time. Since then, however, alternative arrangements have been made to ensure that our officials in the High Commission of India, Islamabad, have full access to Indian news and information.

Uranium dust in the Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad

*69. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in the Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad, air is thick with Uranium dust;

(b) whether it is also a fact that inhaled Uranium dust leads to lung burden and even lung cancer or other deadly side effects; and

(c) if so, what preventive measures have been taken by Government to avoid health hazards for the employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) No Sir.

(b) Uranium has very low specific radioactivity. However, inhaled uranium dust beyond certain limit could lead to high levels of uranium in the lung. High lung burden persisting for long time could lead to some deleterious effects.

(c) Adequate engineering safety features have been incorporated in the design of the plant facilities as per the international standards for handling natural and low enriched uranium oxide materials. Wherever necessary, leak tight containment of equipment and proper ventilation have been provided in order to ensure that uranium aerosol in work area is well below the permissible

limits. All workers in the uranium fuel plants are equipped with personal protective clothings, hand gloves, safety shoes and respirators. Air monitoring is carried out regularly and the radioactivity levels are kept well within the prescribed limits. Periodic medical examination of the workers is also carried out.

Procurement of rice by FCI in Andhra Pradesh

*70. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:
SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether lack of adequate procurement of rice by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) added to problems of Andhra farmers; and

(b) if so, the measures taken to solve the problems of the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) No, Sir. During the Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2000-01 (October-September 71.72 lakh MTs of rice was procured in Andhra Pradesh as against 54.98 lakh MTs during the preceding year. The procurement during the KMS 2000-01 was the highest in the history of Andhra Pradesh.

(b) Does not arise.

Growth rate of economy during Ninth Plan

*71. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the focus of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997—2002) was on accelerated growth recognizing a special role for agriculture for its stronger poverty reduction and employment generating effects; and

(b) if so, the growth rate of the economy, growth of agricultural sector, reduction in number of people below poverty line and growth in employment generation during each year of the Ninth Five Year Plan and Plan as a whole?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The growth rate of the economy and that of agriculture sector during the first four years of the Ninth Five Year Plan is given below.